



## Key Republican calls for 'generational' increase in defense spending to counter U.S. adversaries



Senate Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Roger Wicker, R-Miss., meets with reporters during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington, Jan. 11, 2024.

Associated Press

By STEPHEN GROVES

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The top-ranking Republican on a Senate committee that oversees the military is calling for a "generational investment" in America's

defense, saying aggressive and significant spending increases are necessary to deter coordinated threats from U.S. adversaries such as Russia, Iran and China. Sen. Roger Wicker told The Associated Press that he

will seek an additional \$55 billion in defense spending over the limits that were forged in the deal to suspend the nation's debt limit a year ago. Wicker explained his position in global terms, saying there has

"never been such a level of cooperation and coordination among an axis of aggressors" that aims to challenge U.S. dominance. The plan lays down a significant marker for Senate Republicans as they enter

into a new round of budget fights with Democrats in the heat of a closely fought election year.

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# Key Republican calls for 'generational' increase in defense spending to counter U.S. adversaries

Continued from Front

The White House has proposed \$850 billion in defense spending, adhering to the debt limit deal by proposing a 1% increase from the previous year.

That plan is unlikely to keep pace with inflation and would seek to reduce the military's costs by retiring older ships and aircraft.

Wicker acknowledged it would be "a hill to climb" to convince Congress to break from the spending caps at a time of deep political upheaval. Washington is still grappling with divisions over support for Ukraine, the aftershocks of two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a presidential election between two presumptive candidates — Biden and Republican Donald Trump — who espouse vastly different visions of America's role abroad.

But Wicker, R-Miss., said the U.S. has no choice. "We would be very foolish on a national survival basis to adhere to that when it comes to national defense," said Wicker, the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

While GOP defense hawks have long advocated for robust defense spending, Wicker's plan goes a step further, calling for a broad shift in the U.S. defense posture that would amount to a



In this March 27, 2008, file photo, the Pentagon is seen in this aerial view in Washington.

Associated Press

reshuffling of national priorities. Under his proposal, the military would eventually consume 5% of America's gross domestic product, or total economic output.

Defense spending when measured as a portion of GDP is currently about 3% and has been declining since the height of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has not reached above 5% since the early 1990s.

Back in the 1980s and early 1990s, Wicker said, "nobody took a chance against the United States because we were powerful enough to keep the peace. We are simply not anywhere near that right now."

"I think that the fact that we're in a new Cold War is self-evident," he said.

Wicker's full plan is laid out in a 52-page paper he has been working on for the past year. In it, he makes the

case for a new generation of weapons, pointing to an aging American arsenal as Russia moves to expand its territory in Europe and China tries to show increasing dominance in parts of the Pacific. Closer ties between China and Russia were underscored earlier this month by a visit between leaders Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. The two-day visit — Putin's first trip abroad after being inaugurated to a fifth term in office — reflected a growing partnership between the two nations, an alliance grounded in support for authoritarian regimes and dominance in their respective regions. China has given diplomatic support to Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine and emerged as a top export market for Russian oil and gas, helping fill the Kremlin's war coffers for the ongoing offensive.

Wicker said the high-level meeting between Putin and Xi "ought to be a wake up call."

He said in his proposal that the U.S. faces "the most dangerous threat environment since World War II" and urges a national war footing appropriate for a long, drawn-out conflict with a major world power. For Wicker, that encompasses everything from addressing deferred maintenance on U.S. military facilities that don't have the right voltage on power outlets to preparing for nuclear weaponry in space.

Still, the spending increases are likely to be viewed skeptically by lawmakers wary of growing the defense budget, which already dominates annual discretionary funding. The legislation to suspend the nation's debt limit passed Congress with strong bipartisan support and aimed to limit federal budget growth to 1% for the next six years, although the spending caps were only mandatory through this year's budget. The House Armed Services Committee this month approved with near-unanimous support an \$884 billion proposal for the annual defense authorization bill, keeping within the spending caps but shifting funding towards specific military programs. Yet Senate Democrats are likely to resist further spend-

ing cuts to other government programs.

The Senate committee is set to craft the annual military authorization bill next month, but the chairman, Democratic Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, has not publicly released the spending amount that he will propose. Wicker said that he had been in contact with Reed, as well as top Democratic appropriators, about the plan, but their level of support was not clear.

At the same time, defense hawks like Wicker are navigating the shifting politics of defense spending in their own party under Trump's "America First" brand of foreign policy. Earlier this year, a \$95 billion package of foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan faced heavy resistance from a large portion of congressional Republicans, even though much of the funds would be spent buying equipment and ammunition from U.S.-based defense manufacturers.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has been vocal about countering those within his party who want to push the U.S. towards a more isolationist stance. And Wicker said there was "an opportunity" to win broad support for redoubling U.S. efforts in the Pacific because congressional Republicans are still supportive of countering China. □



Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks during the Libertarian National Convention at the Washington Hilton in Washington, Friday, May 24, 2024.

Associated Press

By JONATHAN J. COOPER  
Associated Press  
PHOENIX (AP) — Indepen-

dent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. filed an election complaint

## Robert F. Kennedy Jr. files complaint over rules for CNN's presidential debate next month

Wednesday alleging CNN is colluding with Democratic President Joe Biden and presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump to exclude him from a debate the network is hosting next month. Kennedy alleges the requirements to participate in the June 27 debate were designed to ensure only Biden and Trump would qualify and Kennedy claims he is being held to a higher standard.

"CNN is making prohibited corporate contributions to both campaigns and the

Biden committee and the Trump committee have accepted these prohibited corporate contributions," a lawyer for Kennedy, Lorenzo Holloway, wrote in a letter to the Federal Election Commission.

CNN said the complaint was without merit.

Biden and Trump agreed this month to the CNN debate and a second on Sept. 10 hosted by ABC, bypassing the nonpartisan commission that has organized debates for nearly four decades. The first debate will come before

Biden and Trump have been formally nominated by their parties this summer.

Kennedy has looked to the debates as a singular opportunity to stand alongside Biden and Trump, lending legitimacy to his longshot bid and convince people inclined to support him that he has a shot at winning. Both the Biden and Trump campaigns fear he could play spoiler.

Kennedy still has time to meet the requirements, though the window is narrowing. □



# Alito rejects calls to quit Supreme Court cases on Trump and Jan. 6 because of flag controversies

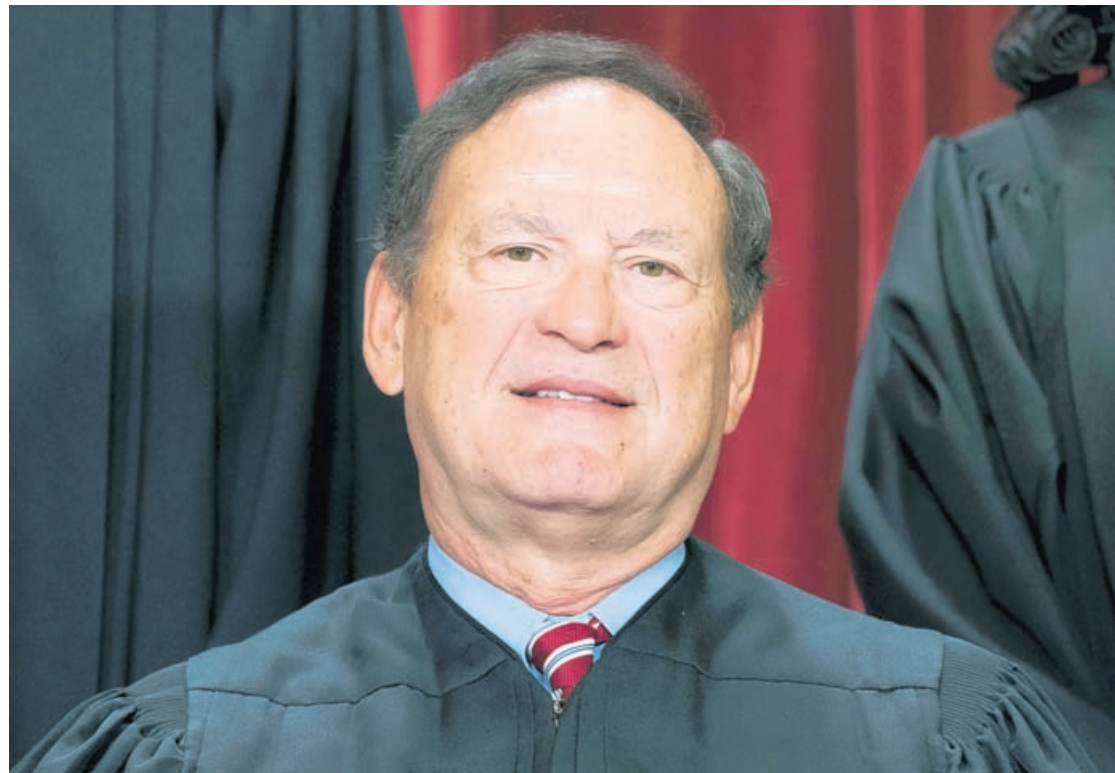
By MARK SHERMAN  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Justice Samuel Alito is rejecting calls to step aside from Supreme Court cases involving former President Donald Trump and Jan. 6 defendants because of the controversy over flags that flew over his homes.

In letters to members of Congress on Wednesday, Alito said his wife, Martha-Ann, was responsible for flying an upside-down flag over his home in 2021 and an "Appeal to Heaven" flag at his New Jersey beach house last year. Both flags were like those carried by rioters who violently stormed the Capitol in January 2021 while echoing Trump's false claims of election fraud.

Neither incident at Alito's homes merited his recusal, wrote the justice, who has rejected calls from Democrats in the past to recuse on other issues.

"I am confident that a reasonable person who is not motivated by political or ideological considerations or a desire to affect the outcome of Supreme Court cases would conclude that the events ... do not meet the applicable standard



Associate Justice Samuel Alito joins other members of the Supreme Court as they pose for a new group portrait, Oct. 7, 2022, at the Supreme Court building in Washington.

Associated Press

for recusal," he wrote. "I am therefore required to reject your request."

Supreme Court justices decide for themselves whether to sit out a case and the only potential consequence for refusing to step aside is impeachment by the House of Representatives and removal from office by the Senate. That has never happened in American history. Trump, who

was in New York while jurors deliberated in his hush money criminal trial, congratulated Alito for "showing the INTELLIGENCE, COURAGE, and 'GUTS'" in refusing to step aside. "All U.S. Judges, Justices, and Leaders should have such GRIT," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

Some Senate Republicans also quickly took to social media Wednesday to

praise Alito for staying involved in the cases.

The court is considering two major cases related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack by a mob of Trump supporters on the Capitol, including charges faced by the rioters and whether Trump has immunity from prosecution on election interference charges. The New York Times reported that an inverted American flag was

seen at Alito's home in Alexandria, Virginia, less than two weeks after the attack on the Capitol. The paper also reported that an "Appeal to Heaven" flag was flown outside the justice's beach home in New Jersey last summer.

The "Appeal to Heaven" flag has in recent years come to symbolize sympathies with the Christian nationalist movement and the false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Trump. According to Americanflags.com, the pine tree on the flag symbolized strength and resilience in the New England colonies while the words "Appeal to Heaven" stemmed from the belief that God would deliver the colonists from tyranny.

An upside-down American flag has come to be a symbol associated with Trump's bogus fraud claims. Dozens of the pro-Trump rioters were carrying similarly inverted flags and chanting slogans like "Stop the Steal" on Jan. 6, 2021. The U.S. Flag Code states that the American flag is not to be flown upside down "except as a signal of dire distress in instance of extreme danger to life or property." □

## Executions worldwide jumped last year to the highest number since 2015, Amnesty report says

By SYLVIA HUI  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — The number of executions recorded worldwide last year jumped to the highest level since 2015, with a sharp rise in Iran and across the Middle East, Amnesty International said in a report released Wednesday.

The human rights group said it recorded a total of 1,153 executions in 2023, a 30% increase from 2022. Amnesty said the figure does not include thousands of death sentences believed to have been carried out in China, where data is not available due to state secrecy.

The group said the spike in recorded executions was primarily driven by Iran, where authorities executed at least 853 people last year, compared to 576 in 2022.

Those executed included 24 women and five people who were children at the time the crimes were committed, Amnesty said, adding that the practice disproportionately affected Iran's Baluch minority.

"The Iranian authorities showed complete disregard for human life and ramped up executions for drug-related offences, further highlighting the discriminatory impact of the

death penalty on Iran's most marginalized and impoverished communities," Agnès Callamard, Amnesty's secretary general, said in a statement.

The group said China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and the United States were the five countries with the highest number of executions in 2023. The total number cited in Amnesty's annual report was the highest it recorded since 2015, when 1,634 people were known to have been executed.

Callamard said progress faltered in the U.S., where executions rose from 18 to 24 and a number of states "demonstrated a chilling

commitment to the death penalty and a callous in-

tent to invest resources in the taking of human life." □



This photo provided by the South Carolina Department of Corrections shows the state's death chamber in Columbia, S.C., including the electric chair, right, and a firing squad chair, left.

Associated Press



# Johns Hopkins team assessing nation's bridges after deadly Baltimore collapse

By LEA SKENE

Associated Press

**BALTIMORE (AP)** — Researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore are assessing the country's bridges to determine the likelihood of another disaster like the one that collapsed the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

The team includes students and faculty members and will focus on large bridges near major ports of entry, officials said in a news release Wednesday.

"We need to know now, not five or 10 years from now, whether there is an outsize risk to bridges across the country," said team leader Michael Shields, an engineer specializing in risk assessment. "The Key Bridge collapse was a wake-up call."

The steel span crumbled in an instant after the container ship Dali lost power and crashed into one of its supporting columns shortly after leaving Baltimore's port on March 26. Six members of a roadwork crew plunged to their deaths.

Experts and officials have noted a number of factors



**Tugboats escort the container ship Dali after it was refloated in Baltimore, Monday, May 20, 2024.**  
Associated Press

that made the bridge vulnerable, including minimal pier protection that hadn't been improved in recent decades even as cargo ships grew larger and more imposing.

"Clearly the risk to the Key Bridge was very different in 2024 than it was in 1977 when the bridge opened," Shields said. "But we don't

currently understand that risk."

The researchers will examine whether other bridges are similarly vulnerable by building models to determine the probability of a ship deviating from course and causing catastrophe in or around major ports.

Johns Hopkins officials said they hope policymakers

will use the findings of their assessment to inform future investment decisions and prioritize infrastructure safety upgrades. They plan to release preliminary findings by the end of the summer, with the complete assessment expected to take about a year to complete. "Between the exponential growth of mega freight

ships and the surge in global shipping traffic, many of our bridges simply weren't built to withstand the pressures of today's maritime landscape," said team member Rachel Sangree, a structural engineer and former bridge inspector. The National Transportation Safety Board, a federal oversight agency that is investigating the collapse, said in its preliminary report that the Dali sailed right past a protective concrete piling also known as a dolphin before bringing down the bridge.

Officials said they are assessing whether pier protection needs to be improved on other Maryland bridges, particularly the Chesapeake Bay Bridge near Annapolis, which links Baltimore and Washington to Maryland's Eastern Shore. Such upgrades are often very costly.

Speaking before a congressional committee this month, board Chair Jennifer Homendy urged lawmakers to conduct risk assessments on the major bridges in their jurisdictions. □

# New Louisiana law will criminalize approaching police under certain circumstances

By SARA CLINE

Associated Press

**BATON ROUGE, La. (AP)** — A new Louisiana law will make it a crime to knowingly approach within 25

feet (7.6 meters) of a police officer while they are "engaged in law enforcement duties" and after the officer has ordered the person to stay back.



**Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry addresses members of the House and Senate on opening day of a legislative special session, Feb. 19, 2024, in the House Chamber at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, La.**

Associated Press

Opponents of the legislation, which Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry signed into law Tuesday, fear the measure could hinder the public's ability to film officers, which has increasingly been used to hold police accountable including in high profile cases, such as the killing of George Floyd. Proponents argue the law will create a buffer-zone to help ensure the safety of officers when it goes into effect Aug. 1.

"This is part of our continued pledge to address public safety in this state," Landry, who has a law enforcement background, said during the bill signing.

A nearly identical bill was vetoed last year by then-Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat. Edwards called

the measure "unnecessary" and said it could be used "to chill exercise of First Amendment rights."

"Each of us has a constitutional right to freely observe public servants as they function in public and within the course and scope of their official duties," Edwards, who served in the U.S. Army and was the son of a sheriff, said in last year's veto message. "Observations of law enforcement, whether by witnesses to an incident with officers, individuals interacting with officers, or members of the press, are invaluable in promoting transparency."

However, with a new governor in office and the GOP continuing to hold a supermajority in the Louisiana

Legislature, the bill had a clear path forward.

Author of the legislation state Rep. Bryan Fontenot, like his fellow Republican lawmakers, said the new law provides officers "peace of mind and safe distance to do their job."

Lawmakers opposing the bill, among the most outspoken being Black Democrats, have echoed Edwards' fears that the bill could impede onlookers' ability to observe police officers. "The twenty-five-foot buffer legislation fundamentally seeks to curtail Louisianians' ability to hold police accountable for violence and misconduct," the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana said in a statement Tuesday. □



## Nearly 3 out of 10 children in Afghanistan face crisis or emergency level of hunger in 2024

By RAHIM FAIEZ  
Associated Press

**ISLAMABAD (AP)** — About 6.5 million children in Afghanistan were forecast to experience crisis levels of hunger in 2024, a non-governmental organization said.

Nearly three out of 10 Afghan children will face crisis or emergency levels of hunger this year as the country feels the immediate impacts of floods, the long-term effects of drought, and the return of Afghans from neighboring Pakistan and Iran, according to a report released late Tuesday by Save The Children.

New figures from global hunger monitoring body Integrated Food Security Phase Classification forecast that 28% of Afghanistan's population, about 12.4 million people, will face acute food insecurity before October. Of those, nearly 2.4 million are predicted to experience emergency levels of hunger, which is one level above famine, according to Save the Children.

The figures show a slight improvement from the last report, released in October 2023, but underline the continuing need for assistance, with poverty affecting half of the population.



Afghan children eat in a makeshift shelter after an earthquake in Gayan district in Paktika province, Afghanistan, Saturday, June 25, 2022.

Associated Press

Torrential rain and flash floods hit northern Afghanistan in May, killing more than 400 people. Thousands of homes were destroyed or damaged and farmland was turned into mud. Save the Children is operating a "clinic on wheels" in Baghlan province, which was hit the worst by floods, as part of its emergency response program. The organization added that an estimated 2.9 million children under the age of 5 are pro-

jected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2024.

Arshad Malik, country director for Save the Children in Afghanistan, said that the NGO has treated more than 7,000 children for severe or acute malnutrition so far this year.

"Those numbers are a sign of the massive need for continuing support for families as they experience shock after shock," Malik said. Children are feeling the devastating impacts of three years of

drought, high levels of unemployment, and the return of more than 1.4 million Afghans from Pakistan and Iran, he added.

"We need long-term, community-based solutions to help families rebuild their lives," Malik said.

More than 557,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since September 2023, after Pakistan began cracking down on foreigners it alleges are in the country illegally, including 1.7 million

Afghans. It insists the campaign isn't directed against Afghans specifically, but they make up most of the foreigners in the South Asian country.

In April, Save the Children said that a quarter-million Afghan children need education, food and homes after being forcibly returned from Pakistan.

Malik added that only 16% of funding for the 2024 humanitarian response plan has been met so far, but nearly half the population needs assistance.

"This is not the time for the world to look away," he said.

Meanwhile, the European Union is allocating an additional 10 million euros (nearly \$10.9 million) to the U.N. food agency for school feeding activities in Afghanistan. These latest funds from the EU follow an earlier contribution of 20.9 million euros (\$22.7 million) towards the World Food Program's school meal program in Afghanistan for 2022 and 2023.

The funding comes at a timely moment and averts WFP having to downsize its school meal program this year because of a lack of funding, the WFP said in a statement. □

## U.N. rights group says Japan needs to do more to counter human rights abuses

By YURI KAGEYAMA  
Associated Press

**TOKYO (AP)** — A group working under the U.N. Human Rights Council has issued a wide-ranging report about rights in Japan, including discrimination against minorities and unhealthy working conditions. The report, issued this week in Geneva, recommended various changes in Japan, such as more training in businesses to raise awareness of rights issues, setting up mechanisms to hear grievances, enhancing diversity and strengthening checks on labor conditions,

as well as sanctions on human rights violations. The U.N. Working Group on Business and Human Rights, which visited Japan last year, is made up of independent human rights experts who work under a mandate from the council, but they don't speak for it. Their report listed as problem areas the gender wage gap and discrimination against the Ainu indigenous group, LGBTQ and people with disabilities, noting a long list of people it considered "at risk." "The crux of the challenges faced by at-risk stakehold-

er groups is the lack of diversity and inclusion in the labor market, on the one hand, and the prevalence of discrimination, harassment and violence in the workplace and society at large on the other," it said. The report called "abhorrent" the working conditions of foreigners and migrants and voiced concern about cancer cases among people working at the Fukushima nuclear plant that suffered meltdowns in 2011.

The report also said protection of whistleblowers in Japan and access to the

judicial process need to be improved. □



A sign hangs on the facade of the headquarters of Johnny & Associates talent agency founded by Johnny Kitagawa in Tokyo, on July 10, 2019.

Associated Press



# Haiti's new prime minister vows unity in first statement since being selected

By **DÁNICA COTO**

**Associated Press**

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico**

**(AP)** — Haiti's newly chosen Prime Minister Garry Conille vowed to seek unity Wednesday in his first statement since a transitional council selected him to head the government in the troubled Caribbean country under siege by criminal gangs.

Conille thanked the civil society groups, political parties and members of the Haitian diaspora who proposed him as a candidate, saying he was "very honored" to have been chosen.

"Together, we will work for a better tomorrow for all the children of our nation," he wrote on X, the social media platform, in Haitian Creole.

Conille submitted his resignation Tuesday as UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, a post he has held since January 2023. He previously served as prime minister of Haiti from October 2011 to May 2012 under then-President Michel Martelly.

Conille studied medicine and public health and helped develop health care in impoverished communities in Haiti, where he helped coordinate reconstruction efforts after the



**Haiti's then Prime Minister Garry Conille speaks with journalists after a press conference in Port-au-Prince, Oct. 6, 2011.**

**Associated Press**

devastating 2010 earthquake. He also served as a U.N. development specialist before becoming a regional director with UNICEF. He now faces a monumental task, with Haiti under siege by gangs that control at least 80% of the Port-au-Prince capital as the country awaits the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from Kenya and other countries supporting the mission.

The prime minister shares executive power with the

presidency, which has been vacant in Haiti since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, whose death left a power vacuum that criminal gangs began to take advantage of later that year. In addition to choosing the prime minister, the transitional council is tasked with arranging presidential elections before early 2026. Council members told The Associated Press late Tuesday that six of seven members with voting powers

had selected Conille for the prime minister role. Laurent St. Cyr, the seventh member, is not in Haiti currently and as a result did not vote. On Wednesday, they issued a statement noting that Conille was one of five prequalified candidates that they interviewed for one hour each on Tuesday, and that they are now working with him to choose a new Cabinet.

"The transitional presidential council renews its firm determination to do every-

thing possible to stem the phenomenon of insecurity and lead the country on the path to free, fair, democratic and inclusive elections," it said.

Conille will replace interim Prime Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert, who has been helping lead the country since former Prime Minister Ariel Henry resigned via letter in April following a surge in gang violence. Gunmen launched coordinated attacks on Feb. 29, seizing control of police stations, opening fire on the main international airport that remained closed for nearly three months and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The wave of violence continues.

Boisvert issued a statement Wednesday congratulating Conille, adding that he "hopes the new prime minister will be able to face the challenges and issues of the moment."

It was not immediately clear if there would be a formal swearing-in ceremony for Conille.

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement that she wished Conille "every success in bringing much-needed peace, stability and hope to the children of Haiti." □

# Brazil president withdraws his country's ambassador to Israel after criticizing the war in Gaza

By **ELEONORE HUGHES and**

**DAVID BILLER**

**Associated Press**

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** —

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva withdrew his ambassador to Israel on Wednesday after months of tensions between the two countries over the war in Gaza, the latest repercussion from a South American nation over Israel's military campaign in the Palestinian territory.

The move was announced in Brazil's official gazette.

Israel's foreign ministry said no official message has



**Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva arrives for a bilateral meeting at the chancellery in Berlin, Germany, Dec. 4, 2023.**

**Associated Press**

yet been received from the Brazilian government on the matter. However, following the media reports, the Brazilian chargé d'affaires was summoned to appear at the ministry on Thursday for a meeting.

Lula has been a frequent critic of Israel's offensive in Gaza, which he compared to the Holocaust earlier this year. That led Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz to summon the Brazilian ambassador to the national Holocaust museum in Jerusalem for a public reprimand.

At the time, Lula called Brazil's Ambassador Frederico Meyer home. Wednesday's action represented an escalation a diplomatic downgrade, with the Brazilian Embassy in Israel still there but without an ambassador in the post.

According to a person at Brazil's foreign ministry, the official removal comes was in response to Meyer's humiliation by Israel's top diplomat. The person, who has knowledge of the situation, spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to speak publicly. □



## Snakes you may encounter on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

### Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

### Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

### Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □





# Foundation Rancho is preparing to celebrate 200 years of Oranjestad this year

On May 24th, Stichting Rancho announced via their social media platforms that they have signed an agreement to use the Nikki Habibe building in Oranjestad. The goal is to create a multifunctional and creative space where the public can learn more about the history of Oranjestad and celebrate the city's 200th anniversary.

This building is located at Nikki Habibe Plaza. The foundation explained that this is a central location visited by both locals and tourists. Additionally, the area hosts various local businesses offering different types of services.

The aim is for Stichting Rancho to collaborate with these local businesses to create more activity in the city center. The foundation further explained that this space will temporarily serve as a reference point for those who want to learn about the history of Oranjestad. It will also function as a sales point for artistic works and products reflecting the theme of the 200th anniversary celebration of Oranjestad.

This initiative has been made possible with the support and backing of various stakeholders and aims to demonstrate how NGOs and the private sector can collaborate to create social and cultural initiatives in Oranjestad.

"Stichting Rancho is open to collaboration with local



artists to showcase their works and make the space multifunctional. Oranjestad offers a central point for developing your creations and expressions. Feel free to contact us to explore the possibility of joining and working together. The community of Aruba is invited to learn more about Oranjestad and participate in the 200th-anniversary celebration," the foundation emphasized. Clifford Rosa, director of Stichting Rancho, explained that they are working to hold events on June 24th and July 24th to kick off the celebrations, with the main event scheduled for August 24, 2024.

"The first step currently is the Nikki Habibe initiative, and the first event is planned for June 24th," he highlighted.

For some time now, Stichting

Rancho has been promoting the celebration of Oranjestad's 200th anniversary and what this means for Aruba. The foundation's mission is to create a joyful union and involve everyone who knows Aruba in one way or another to contribute together and celebrate the bicentennial of Oranjestad in an epic and unique way this year.

"With the ultimate goal of taking advantage of this historical opportunity to celebrate together our history and heritage of our beloved Oranjestad and the entire Aruba," Stichting Rancho underscored.

## History

According to the foundation, the history of Oranjestad began with a population situated near Paardenbaai, which provided good access for larger ships, resulting in

lively trade.

The fishermen, due to their proximity to Oranjestad's administrative heart, found a market for their fish. Initially, the population consisted of modest huts made of maize stalks, firmly woven and later covered with clay.

According to Johan Hartog's book published in 1996, "Aruba in oude ansichten," Rancho was a small fishing village where around fifty fishermen lived. After 1935, when house numbering began, the boundaries became somewhat blurred, and it became part of Oranjestad.

In 1912, Rancho was first mentioned on a map by Johannes Werbata. At that time, the district was bounded by the salt flats, Paardenbaai, Socotoro, and

Oranjestad. Older residents still mention the entrance gate, Port'i Eagle, a square located in Arendstraat, near Franklinstraat.

Regarding the southern boundary, the foundation indicates that there was no total agreement. Some believe the sea formed the boundary, while others think the current J.G. Emanstraat (formerly Noordstraat) was the boundary. The area where Havenstraat, Schelpstraat, and L.G. Smith Blvd. are located is still a subject of discussion. By the end of the 20th century, the neighborhood was populated, and Rancho officially became part of Oranjestad.

The 1912 Werbata map also marks a rancho at the mouth of San Nicolas (now known as Rodgers Beach), but this name is no longer mentioned. Rancho not only provided housing for the fishing community (in the early 1900s, there were about fifty), but also for the itinerant traders who tried to sell their goods to the island's population during the day and found lodging and enjoyment.

The wharf provided (mostly at night) a good opportunity for the illegal importation of contraband goods, such as barrels of rum and other alcoholic beverages from Curaçao, which were floated ashore with buoys and brought to land by the Rancheros. □

## Aruba to me



**ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.**

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best

moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. □



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## Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished

**ST. CRUZ** — The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occur-

rence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

### Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands). (Source: arikok national park)

The aforementioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worth-



while to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

## Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!



(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island,

these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiri Beach (Near the Ling & Song Supermarket) □





## Create museum memories

**ORANJESTAD — Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you these museums.**

### Museum of Industry Aruba

The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas—better known as the art capital of Aruba. This museum exhibits the industrial history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aru-

ba's industrial history, which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments Fund in 2003 so it can be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruba Museum Foundation (Fundacion Museo Aruban), which is a foundation set to maintain, preserve, and protect the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm.

For more information, check out their Facebook page Museum of Industry Aruba.

### Archaeological Museum of

### Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in the area has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's, AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1.700 m2.



In 1997, the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004, a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006, restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the soon-to-be exhibition space. In December 2007, the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location, the National Archaeological

Museum Aruba disposes of approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit conveys information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island through archaeological objects and modern exhibition techniques. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum also hosts attractive public programs, including lectures, educational projects, temporary exhibits and workshops.

The museum is open daily from 9:30 am till 4:30 pm. For more information check out the Facebook page Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba. □



## Visit the island's hidden natural pools



**(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two "hidden" natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.**

### Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga

(Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water

and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

### Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural pool that is hidden there. Because it's still so new, there is no official name for



it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also become a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won't be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where

wild northern waves crash into each other. Sounds scary, but if you look down on your right, you'll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder.

**Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours**



## Did you know about...?

# The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called Did you know about...?, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is placa. Cents are called cen (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

### Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called Dos placa; 10-cent coins were called debchi; 25-cent coins were called diez placa and the 50-cent coin was once called Yotin (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

### Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban



artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

### Current design and symbolism 10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Turtuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

### 25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also

a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

### 50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

### 100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

### 200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

### Extra fact:

the word “florin” supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word “florino”, both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.□

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba





**CROSSWORD**

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

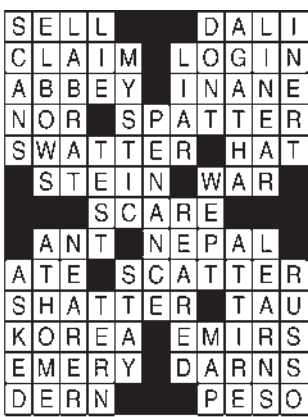
- 1 Remini of TV  
5 Held power  
10 Writer Ferber  
11 Capitol group  
12 Polynesian idol  
13 Arcade chomper  
14 Willie in Cooperstown  
16 Roberto in Cooperstown  
20 Irritated  
23 Cochlea site  
24 Keen  
25 Some trumpeters  
27 Stephen of "The Crying Game"  
28 Washing-ton or Bush  
29 Don in Cooperstown  
32 Ted in Cooperstown  
36 Purify  
39 Fresh reaction  
40 Weds in secret  
41 Self-referential

- 42 Friendly party  
43 Former spouses

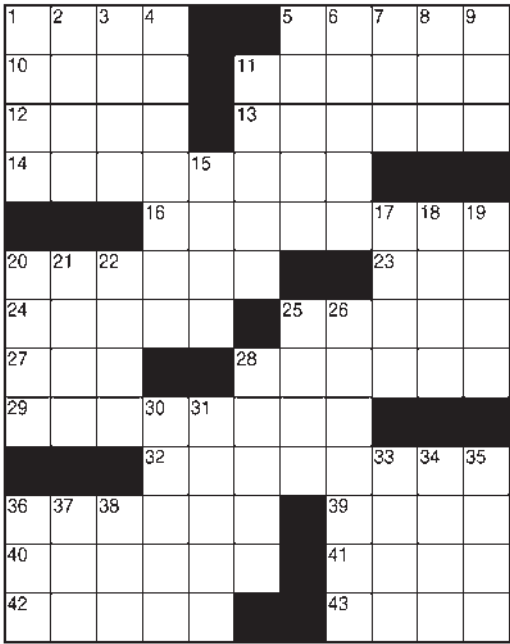
**DOWN**

- 1 "Why don't we!"  
2 Fix copy  
3 "Lonely Boy" singer  
4 Barber's offering  
5 Empire  
6 Surrendering cry  
7 Hurried flight  
8 Greek vowel  
9 Cub's home  
11 Ignore the limit  
15 Merriment

- 17 At hand  
18 Zesty flavor  
19 Gaelic language  
20 Buddy, in Westerns  
21 Bakery worker  
22 Wharf  
25 Hawk  
26 Sighed cry  
28 Strong winds  
30 Shoplift food source  
31 Comfort food  
33 TV's Trebek  
34 Deck worker  
35 Relaxing resorts  
36 Sleep state  
37 Yale student  
38 Sly one



Yesterday's answer



5-30

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-30

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

YFNDN'W P TSY SG OW SOY

FNDN YFPY PDN JCDHW, APV.

ZN PTT VNNH YS LOWY GTM.

— YDPICW WKSYY

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: A HERO IS SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMES WITH HIS FREEDOM. — BOB DYLAN

**Cruise ship Schedule: June 01 - June 25 2024**

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
SAT	01	NORWEGIAN JADE	10.00	20.00	C	1
THU	06	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	11	SILVER SHADOW	08.00	23.00	B	1
		ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	20.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL MARDI GRAS	13.00	23.00	I	1
WED	12	CARNIVAL HORIZON	07.00	15.00	B	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	18	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	I	1
TUE	25	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

**Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba**

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

**Supermarket hours**



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

**Electrical power**



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

**Drinking water**



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

**Safety**



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7



## What you will and won't see from June's planetary parade

**By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
**AP Science Writer**  
**DALLAS (AP)** — Six planets will link up before dawn on June 3 in what's known as a planetary parade. But the spectacle won't be as eye-catching as expected: Only two planets will be visible to the naked eye. Here's what to know about this fairly common celestial event.

### WHAT IS A PARADE OF PLANETS?

Our solar system's planets zip around the sun at an angle. Every once in a while, several align on the right side of the sun to be visible across a narrow band of Earth's sky. How common the phenomenon is depends on how many planets align and whether or not they are visible without binoculars or a telescope. A handful of planets are usually in the night sky at any given time, though they can be obscured below the horizon or blocked out by the sun's light. □

# Classifieds

#### Casa Del Mar

Eagle Beach  
2 BR 2 Bath WK 19 room 1405  
Price : \$ 8760  
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Price :\$ 8100  
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217821

#### Caribbean Palm Village

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wk 12 - E305  
wk 34 - B107  
wk 35 - B107  
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#### San Nicolas:

Aloe:Tel. 584 4606

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Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

### TAXI SERVICES

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Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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Fundacion Contra Violencia  
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Centre for Diabetes  
Tel. 524 8888

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Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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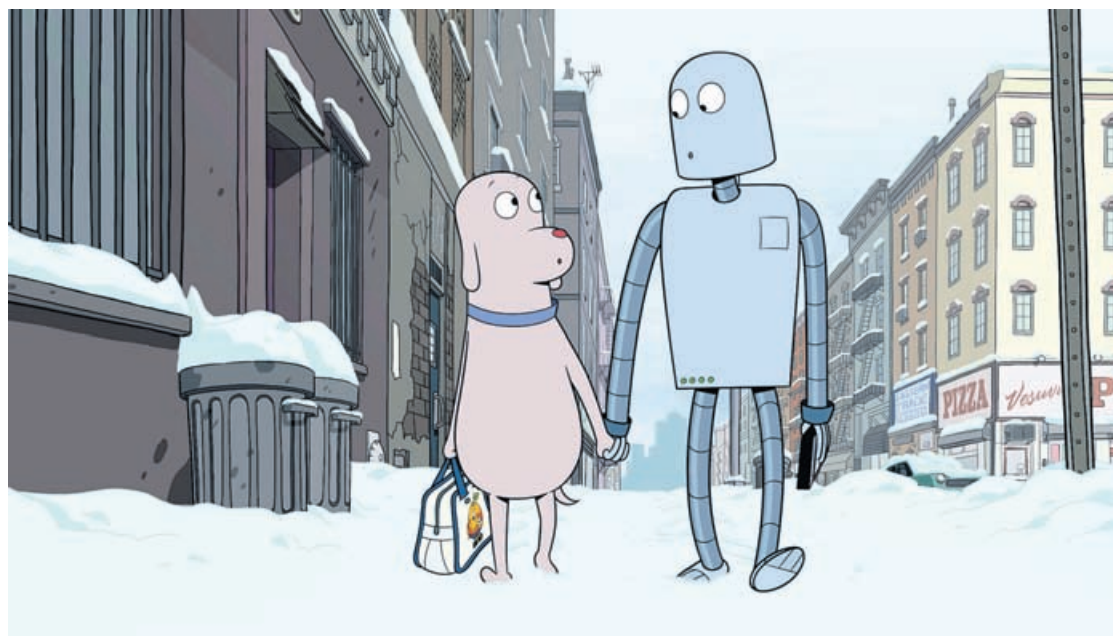
## Review: 'Robot Dreams' is more profound than it has any right to be

By JAKE COYLE  
AP Film Writer

It's one of those strange but immutable truths of the movies that a song like Earth, Wind & Fire's "September" can play in roughly a thousand films before a movie about a dog and a robot comes along and blows them all out of the water.

The animated "Robot Dreams" is wordless, so the songs play an outsized influence in conjuring its whimsical and gently existential tone. But Pablo Berger's "Robot Dreams," a 1980s New York-set fable about loved ones who come and go, doesn't just use "September" for a scene or even two. It's the soundtrack to the friendship between Dog and Robot (yes, those are the protagonists' names in this disarmingly simple film), and its melody returns in various forms whenever they're reminded of each other.

To a remarkable degree, "Robot Dreams" has fully imbibed all the melancholy and joy of Earth, Wind & Fire's disco classic. Just as the song asks "Do you remember?" so too does "Robot Dreams," a sweetly wistful little movie that, like a good pop song, express-



This image released by Neon shows a scene from the animated film "Robot Dreams."

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es something profound without wasting a word. Remembering is also helpful when it comes to the film, itself. I first saw "Robot Dreams" over a year ago at the Cannes Film Festival. Its release comes months after "Robot Dreams" was Oscar nominated for best animated film. But for whatever reason, the film is only arriving in North American theaters this Friday.

It's an unconventional release pattern for an unconventional film. "Robot Dreams," adapted from Sara Varon's 2007 graphic novel, is likewise an all-ages

movie in a curious way. It's very much for kids, but it's also so mature in its depictions of relationships that older generations may swoon hardest for it.

"Robot Dreams" begins in the East Village where Dog lives a rather lonely life. Before he sits down to eat a microwave dinner, he notices his solitary reflection in the TV screen. An ad, though, sparks Dog to order the Amica 2000. A few days later, a box arrives, Dog assembles its contents and soon a friendly robot is smiling back at him.

Together, they have a

grand old time around a New York colorfully rendered with pointillist detail. They jump the subway turnstiles, visit Woolworths and rollerblade in Central Park (with "September" playing on the boombox). But after an outing to Playland (which looks much more like Coney Island), Robot's enthusiasm gets him into some trouble. After frolicking in the water, he lies down on the beach and later finds he can't move. This may be a movie about a Dog who rollerblades and a Robot who eats hot dogs, but the scientific real-

ity of rust is one suspense of disbelief too far for "Robot Dreams."

Despite all of Dog's efforts, Robot is stuck, and, this being September, the beach is soon closed for the off-season. Much of "Robot Dreams" passes through the seasons while Robot dreamily sleeps through the winter and Dog is forced to go on with his life, and maybe try to meet someone new.

The dreams of each can be surreal; Dog has a bowling alley visit with a snowman who bowls his own head, while Robot imagines a "Wizard of Oz"-like fantasy. But both are consumed by fears of their friend's abandonment while progressively finding new experiences and friends. New characters enter, with their own New Yorks (kite-flying in the park, rooftop barbecues) and their own soundtracks. "Robot Dreams" movingly turns into a story about moving on while still cherishing the good times you once shared with someone a valuable lesson to young and old, in friendship and romance.

And even this sense of memory runs deeper in "Robot Dreams" than you might be prepared for. □

## Wu-Tang Clan's unreleased 'Once Upon a Time in Shaolin' is headed to an Australia museum

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The sole physical copy of Wu-Tang Clan's unreleased "Once Upon a Time in Shaolin" is

headed to Australia's Museum of Old and New Art. Only a handful of ears have listened to Wu-Tang Clan's

seventh studio album to date. But next month, lucky MONA visitors may be able to hear part of it, too.

In addition to putting the famed piece of music history on display, MONA said it would host private listening sessions featuring select tracks from the album between June 15 and June 24. Tickets, set to be released Thursday, are free but there's only a small number available.

"Run don't walk, bring da ruckus, etc." MONA wrote on Instagram Tuesday. The album will be a part of the Tasmania museum's larger "Namedropping" exhibition that opens next month. "Once Upon a Time in Sha-

olin" has been called the world's rarest album.

After spending six years creating the 31-track double album, the multiplatinum hip-hop group put the single copy up for auction in 2015, on the condition that it not be put to commercial use. At the time, Wu-Tang Clan member RZA said he wanted the album packaged in a hand-crafted silver and nickel case that includes a 174-page book wrapped in leather to be viewed as a piece of contemporary art.

Entrepreneur Martin Shkreli bought the album at the auction for \$2 million but was later convicted of lying to investors and cheat-

ing them out of millions of dollars in two failed hedge funds he operated.

"Once Upon a Time in Shaolin" was sold to satisfy some of Shkreli's court debts in 2021. Authorities did not immediately release information about the buyer or the price, but The New York Times reported that cryptocurrency collective PleasrDAO paid an intermediary \$4 million for the album.

Shkreli, who is also known for jacking up the price of a life-saving drug and his "Pharma Bro" persona, was released from prison in 2022 after serving much of a seven-year sentence. □



RZA attends "A Wu-Tang Experience: Live at Red Rocks Amphitheatre" screening at Walter Reade Theater on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press



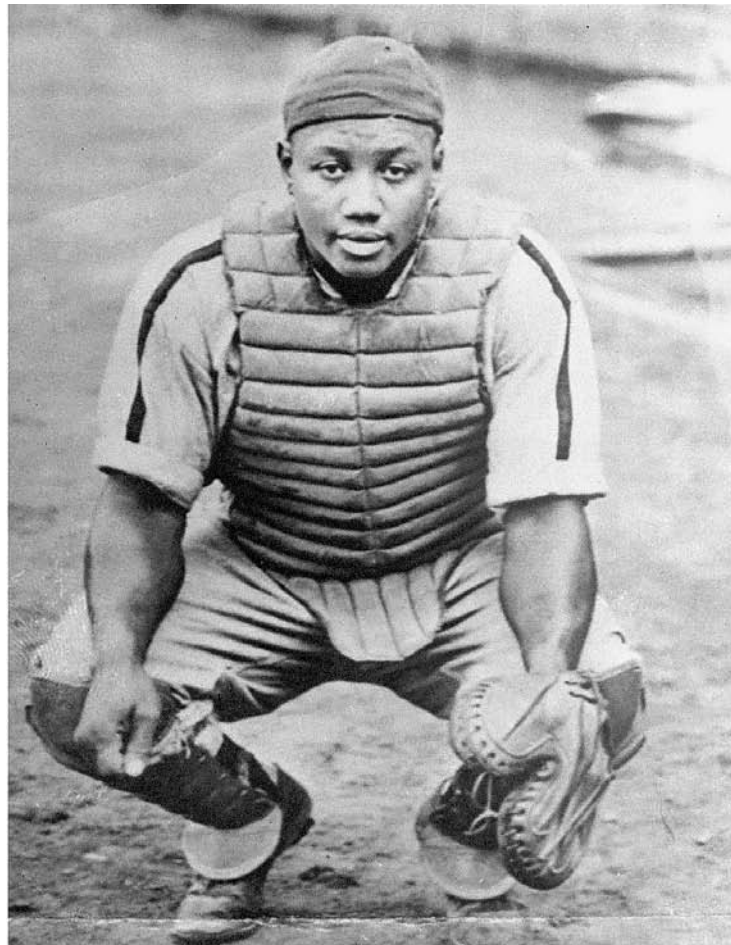
# Josh Gibson becomes MLB career and season batting leader as Negro Leagues statistics incorporated

By **RONALD BLUM**  
AP Baseball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Josh Gibson became Major League Baseball's career leader with a .372 batting average, surpassing Ty Cobb's .367, when Negro Leagues records for more than 2,300 players were incorporated Tuesday after a three-year research project.

Gibson's .466 average for the 1943 Homestead Grays became the season standard, followed by Charlie "Chino" Smith's .451 for the 1929 New York Lincoln Giants. They overtook the .440 by Hugh Duffy for the National League's Boston team in 1894.

Gibson also became the career leader in slugging percentage (.718) and OPS (1.177), moving ahead of Babe Ruth (.690 and 1.164). "It's a show of respect for great players who performed in the Negro Leagues due to circumstances beyond their control and once those circumstances changed demonstrated that they were truly major leaguers," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press. "Maybe the single biggest factor was the success of players



Baseball catcher Josh Gibson in an undated photo.

Associated Press

who played in the Negro Leagues and then came to the big leagues."

A special committee on baseball records decided in 1969 to recognize six major leagues dating to 1876: the National (which launched in 1876), the American (1901), the American Association

(1882-1891), Union Association (1884), Players' League (1890) and Federal League (1914-1915). It excluded the National Association (1871-75), citing an "erratic schedule and procedures." MLB announced in December 2020 that it would be "correcting a longtime oversight" and would add

the Negro Leagues. John Thorn, MLB's official historian, chaired a 17-person committee that included Negro Leagues experts and statisticians.

"The condensed 60-game season for the 2020 calendar year for the National League and American League prompted us to think that maybe the shortened Negro League seasons could come under the MLB umbrella, after all," Thorn said.

An updated version of MLB's database will become public before the St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants play a tribute game to the Negro Leagues on June 20 at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama.

Baseball Hall of Fame President Josh Rawitch said statistics on Cooperstown plaques will remain the same because they reflect the information available at the time of a player's induction. Standards for season leaders is the same for Negro Leagues as the other leagues: 3.1 plate appearances or one inning for each game played by a player's team.

Gibson's .974 slugging percentage in 1937 becomes the season record, and

Barry Bonds' .863 in 2001 dropped to fifth, also trailing Mules Suttles' .877 in 1926, Gibson's .871 in 1943 and Smith's .870 in 1929.

Bond's prior OPS record of 1.421 in 2004 dropped to third behind Gibson's 1.474 in 1937 and 1.435 in 1943.

Willie Mays gained 10 hits from the 1948 Birmingham Black Barons, increasing his total to 3,293. Minnie Minoso surpassed 2,000 hits, credited with 150 for the New York Cubans from 1946-1948 that boosted his total to 2,113.

Jackie Robinson, who broke MLB's color barrier with the 1947 Dodgers, was credited with 49 hits with the 1945 Kansas City Monarchs that increased his total to 1,567.

Among pitchers, Satchel Paige gained 28 wins that raised his total to 125.

The committee met six times and dealt with issues such as when compiled league statistics didn't make sense, such as a league having more wins than losses and walks that were missing. Researchers had to identify whether players with the same name were one person or separate, tracking dates of birth, and identify people listed by nicknames. □

# Gymnastics star Gabby Douglas pulls out of U.S. Championships, ending her bid for a third Olympics

By **WILL GRAVES**  
AP National Writer

**FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)** — Gabby Douglas' long shot bid to make the U.S. women's gymnastics team for the Paris Olympics is over. The 2012 Olympic all-around champion withdrew from the USA Gymnastics Championships on Wednesday, citing an ankle injury.

The 28-year-old Douglas, who also helped the U.S. win gold in the team competition at the 2016 Olympics, had been attempting a comeback after an eight-year layoff. She returned to competi-

tion at the American Classic last month and made her first appearance at a major U.S. meet at the U.S. Classic in Hartford, Connecticut, two weeks ago. Douglas fell twice on the uneven bars in her first rotation, finishing her routine while the crowd chanted her name. She withdrew from the remainder of the meet but did not offer specifics.

Douglas qualified to compete in three events vault, uneven bars and balance beam but did not meet the minimum score standard to compete in the all-around, limiting her chances of

making what will be a highly competitive five-woman U.S. team.

Douglas, the first Black woman to win the Olympic title, announced her return last summer, saying her love for the sport had returned while watching the 2022 U.S. championships.

"It ended rough for me in 2016, so I didn't want to end on that note," Douglas said before the U.S. Classic. "Regardless of the outcome, I wanted to make sure I end on love and joy instead of hating something that I loved."

She has spent most of the last two years training in

Texas under Valeri Liukin, the father and coach of

2008 Olympic all-around champion Nastia Liukin. □



Gabby Douglas competes on the uneven bars during the U.S. Classic gymnastics event Saturday, May 18, 2024, in Hartford, Conn.

Associated Press



# Carlos Alcaraz overcomes a shaky forehand and a qualifier to reach the French Open's third round

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**  
AP Tennis Writer

**PARIS (AP)** — Carlos Alcaraz's forehand was giving him a hard time at the French Open. So was the 176th-ranked qualifier across the net. After ceding the third set and trailing by a break in the fourth, Alcaraz needed to get in gear and he did, taking the last five games to beat Jesper de Jong 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 Wednesday in the second round.

Heavy rain from early in the day caused the postponement of 23 singles matches, so Alcaraz was lucky to get the chance to compete, and advance, under the retractable roof



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates winning his second round match of the French Open tennis tournament against Netherlands' Jesper de Jong at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris, Wednesday, May 29, 2024.

Associated Press

at Court Philippe Chatrier. Still, he could not quite shake de Jong, a 23-year-old from the Netherlands with a flashy game who was participating in just his second Grand Slam main draw.

Alcaraz, a former No. 1 who is seeded No. 3, has won two major championships and is still just 21.

But Alcaraz has been dealing with a bothersome right arm that limited his preparation for Roland Garros and, he said, made him afraid to hit his big forehand with full force. He has been wearing a white sleeve on that forearm and did so again Wednesday; perhaps it helped things, although he ended up with 26 unforced errors on the forehand side, more than half of his 47 total miscues. So while he usually takes pride in being an entertainer, and not just an athlete, he needed to recalibrate that a bit.

"I saw that I need to forget about putting on a show. ... It was difficult for me today," Alcaraz said. "I was in trouble a little bit, but really happy to do it at the end."

Only, however, after de Jong became the lowest-ranked man to win a set against Alcaraz at a major tournament, then broke to go ahead 2-1 in the fourth. Alcaraz would not drop a game the rest of the way in the 3-hour, 9-minute match.

"I prefer to not spend not too much time on the court," said Alcaraz, who removed his arm sleeve and donned a black windbreaker as de Jong exited toward the locker room to a standing ovation. "But every match is different."

Showers halted play on the outside courts after about 45 minutes at the beginning of the day.

Only Chatrier and Court Suzanne Lenglen can be covered, so matches at only those two places were able to proceed. □



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